

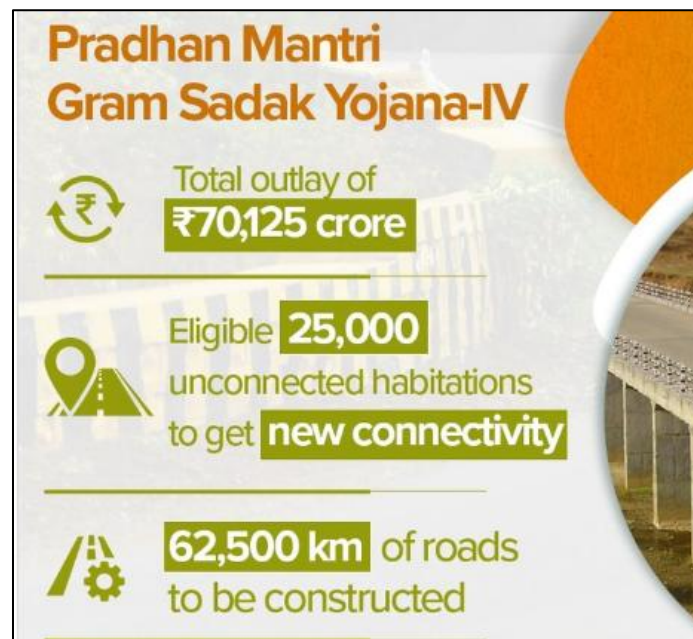
August - 14

## TNPSC BITS

- ❖ Jammu and Kashmir and Maharashtra completed their first interstate Agri trade via eNAM with 11 tonnes of apples and pears reaching the Pune Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC).
- ❖ The book titled 'Why the Constitution Matters' is authored by former Chief Justice of India (CJI) Dhananjaya Y. Chandrachud.
- ❖ The DSP Mutual Fund has launched the DSP Nifty500 Flexicap Quality 30 Index Fund, which is India's first flexi-cap index fund.
- ❖ The World Sanskrit Day, also known as Vishva-Sanskrita-Dinam, is celebrated on August 09<sup>th</sup> annually to honour one of the world's oldest languages, Sanskrit.
- ❖ Aadhaar face authentication hit a record 19.36 crore transactions in July 2025.
  - This marked a threefold rise from 5.77 crore in July 2024 as per the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology.

## NATIONAL NEWS

### Standing Committee Report on PMGSY



- ❖ The Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) was launched in 2000 as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme to improve rural connectivity.



- ❖ The Standing Committee on Rural Development and Panchayati Raj presented its 17<sup>th</sup> report in the Lok Sabha.
- ❖ The report highlighted serious concerns over the poor quality and implementation of roads constructed under PMGSY.
- ❖ It recommended relaxing road construction norms to allow states to adjust road designs and widths according to local terrain and transport needs.
- ❖ The report has proposed constructing an additional 100 km of rural roads based on recommendations from the local MP, funded by the Consolidated Fund of India.
- ❖ The committee also called for updating PMGSY-IV road surveys using the latest population data and making consultation with the local MPs mandatory for road selection and approval.

### **MERITE Scheme**

## **MERITE SCHEME**

## **ELEVATING TECHNICAL EDUCATION ACROSS INDIA**

- **Cabinet nod for MERITE Scheme in 275 technical institutions** comprising 175 engineering institutions & 100 polytechnics
- **Covers all States and UTs** with interventions aligned to NEP-2020

**Expected outcomes:**

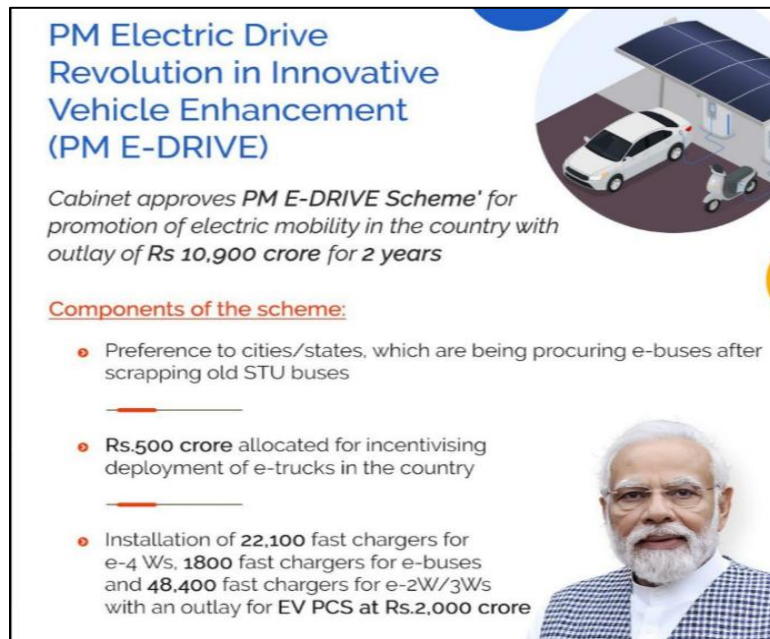
<b>Enhanced learning and employability skills</b> among students	<b>Increased transition rates</b> across student groups	<b>Strengthened research and innovation</b> environment
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- ❖ The Union Cabinet has approved the World Bank-aided MERITE scheme for 275 technical institutions across India.
- ❖ MERITE stands for the Multidisciplinary Education and Research Improvement in Technical Education.
- ❖ The scheme will cover 175 engineering colleges and 100 polytechnic institutes over five years from 2025 to 2030.
- ❖ The scheme aims to improve the quality, equity and governance in line with the National Education Policy 2020.

- ❖ It will focus on employability research, innovation, digitalisation and support for women faculty in academic leadership.
- ❖ Institutions like IITs, IIMs, All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) and National Board of Accreditation (NBA) will support implementation.

### **PM E-Drive Scheme Extension**

- ❖ The Indian government has extended the PM E-Drive scheme (the Prime Minister Electric Drive) by two years till March 2028.
- ❖ The scheme supports the electric buses, ambulances and trucks with financial incentives to promote clean mobility.
- ❖ Incentives for the electric two-wheelers, electric rickshaws and electric three-wheelers will end by March 2026.
- ❖ The scheme offers up to ₹9.6 lakh as an incentive for switching to electric trucks with a target of about 5600 trucks nationwide.



**PM Electric Drive  
Revolution in Innovative  
Vehicle Enhancement  
(PM E-DRIVE)**

*Cabinet approves PM E-DRIVE Scheme' for promotion of electric mobility in the country with outlay of Rs 10,900 crore for 2 years*

**Components of the scheme:**

- Preference to cities/states, which are being procuring e-buses after scrapping old STU buses
- Rs.500 crore allocated for incentivising deployment of e-trucks in the country
- Installation of 22,100 fast chargers for e-4 Ws, 1800 fast chargers for e-buses and 48,400 fast chargers for e-2W/3Ws with an outlay for EV PCS at Rs.2,000 crore

The infographic includes an illustration of a white electric car and a small electric vehicle parked under a solar panel roof. A portrait of Prime Minister Narendra Modi is also featured in the bottom right corner.

### **9th Foundation Day of GeM**

- ❖ The Government e-Marketplace (GeM) celebrated its 9th Foundation Day on 8 August 2025 in New Delhi.
- ❖ The GeM recorded Gross Merchandise Value (GMV) of Rs 5.4 lakh crore in the financial year 2024 to 2025.
- ❖ The GeM was launched in 2016 as a digital platform for transparent and efficient public procurement.

- ❖ In nine years, the GeM onboarded 1.5 lakh women-led enterprises, startups, self-help groups (SHGs), artisans and micro and small enterprises (MSEs).
- ❖ The 2025 celebration was held on the theme 'Ease Access and Inclusion'.
- ❖ GeM is offering training and onboarding support to state governments, public sector undertakings and local bodies.



### **CATCH Program**



- ❖ The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has launched the Cancer AI and Technology Challenge (CATCH).
- ❖ CATCH is a joint innovation grant program by IndiaAI Mission in partnership with the National Cancer Grid (NCG).

- ❖ The program aims to accelerate the validation and deployment of artificial intelligence (AI) in cancer screening, diagnosis, treatment and patient care across India.
- ❖ CATCH will support AI solutions for early detection, clinical decision making, patient engagement, research, hospital operations and data management.
- ❖ The initiative addresses India's rising cancer burden and limited access to timely diagnosis and care.

### Work for Viksit Bharat Portal



- ❖ NITI Aayog has started the Work for Viksit Bharat Portal to hire experts for government projects.
- ❖ Young professionals up to 32 years with a master's or engineering degree can apply.
- ❖ Senior Advisors aged up to 50 years with 8-15 years of experience can also apply.
- ❖ The portal covers many sectors like agriculture, education, health, energy and environment.

## INTERNATIONAL NEWS

### SheLeads II Program

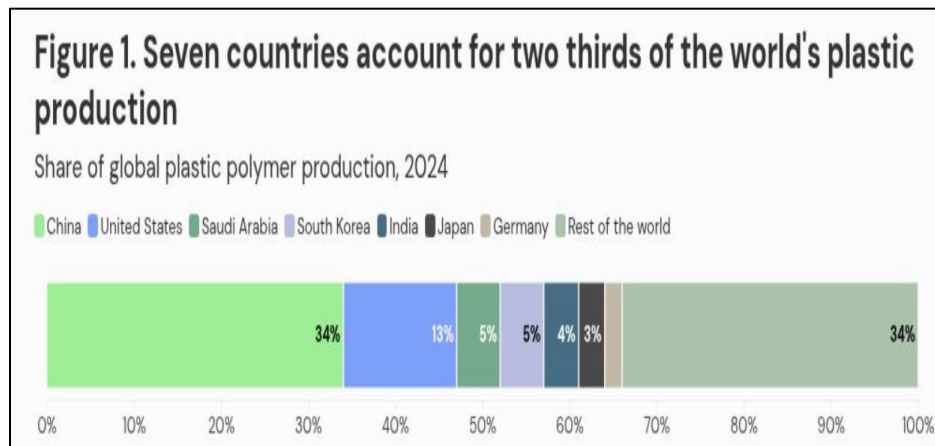
- ❖ The second edition of the United Nations (UN) Women's SheLeads II programme was held in New Delhi.
- ❖ The UN Women India Country Office organises the workshop to build capacity in women's public and political leadership.
- ❖ The programme follows the passing of the Women's Reservation Act 2023, which mandates a 33 per cent reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and the State Legislative Assemblies.



- ❖ SheLeads aims to equip women with skills and networks to contest future national and state elections and strengthen gender equality in governance.



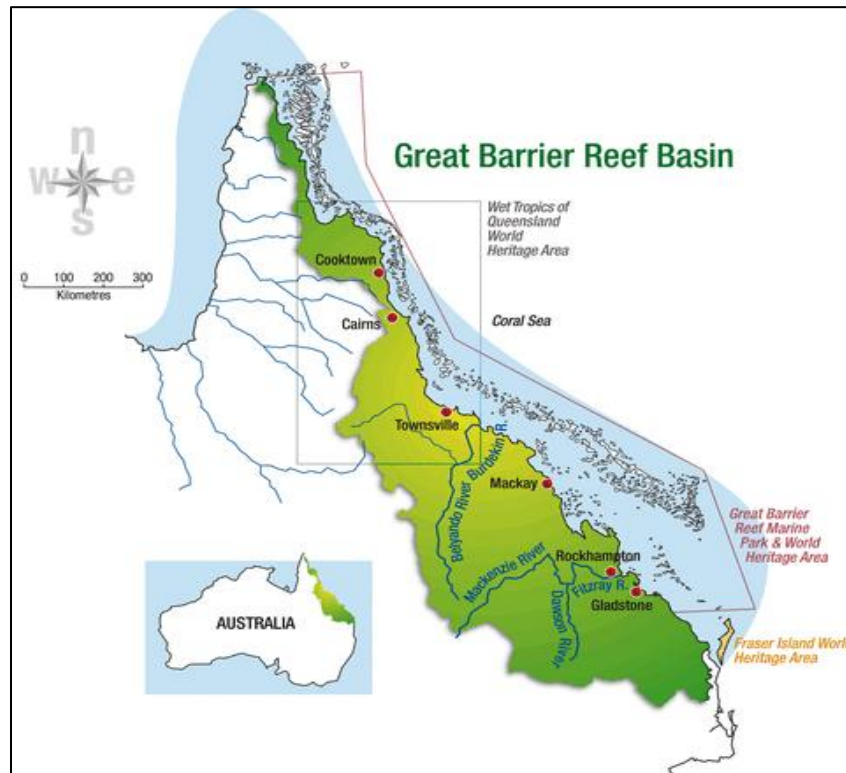
### Global Plastic Production in 2024



- ❖ A study by Eunomia and Zero Carbon Analytics shows that seven countries produced two-thirds of the most used plastics in 2024.
- ❖ China alone accounted for 34 per cent of the global production of polyethylene, polypropylene, polyethylene terephthalate and polystyrene.
- ❖ This output is equal to the combined total of the next six top-producing countries.
- ❖ The United States followed with 13 per cent, while Saudi Arabia and South Korea each contributed 5 per cent.
- ❖ India produced 4 per cent, Japan 3 per cent, and Germany 2 per cent of the total.
- ❖ China's state-owned Sinopec was the top plastic producer globally with 5.4 percent of total output.

## ENVIRONMENT NEWS

### Loss of the Great Barrier Reef



- ❖ The Great Barrier Reef has recorded its highest annual loss of live coral since monitoring began 39 years ago.
- ❖ Coral loss followed a mass bleaching event in 2024, was driven by climate change-related heat stress.
- ❖ Despite this loss, total coral cover remains near the long-term average due to growth since 2017.
- ❖ The reef system covers 344000 square kilometres off the northeast coast of Australia.
- ❖ The reef is divided into three regions, with coral losses in 2024 of nearly one-third in the south.
- ❖ The northern section lost a quarter of its coral, and the central section saw a 14 per cent decline.
- ❖ The 2023 to 2024 global heatwave led to the fourth and worst recorded global coral bleaching event.
- ❖ Heat stress affected nearly 84 per cent of the world's reef areas, including the Great Barrier Reef.

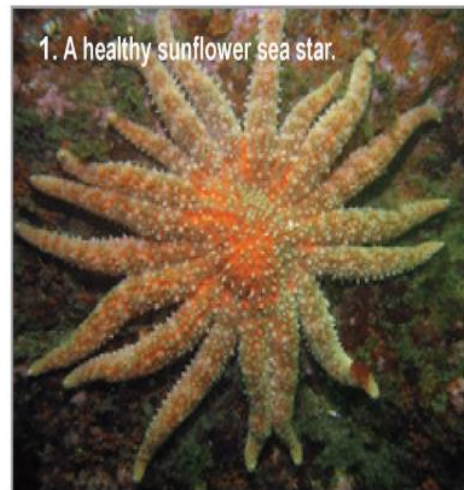
- ❖ Coral bleaching occurs when prolonged high temperatures cause corals to expel algae and turn white.

### **Sea Star Wasting Disease**

- ❖ Scientists have identified the bacterium *Vibrio pectenicida* as the cause of sea star wasting disease.
- ❖ The disease had killed billions of sea stars over more than a decade along North America's Pacific coast.
- ❖ The disease affected over 20 species, including the sunflower sea star, whose population declined by 90 percent within five years of the outbreak starting in 2013.
- ❖ Infected sea stars develop lesions and their arms fall off, leading to death.
- ❖ Sea stars are key predators in kelp forest ecosystems, which provide habitat for fish, sea otters and seals.

#### **Causes and impacts of Sea Star Wasting Syndrome**

- An unknown, virus-sized pathogen, which research is ongoing to isolate and identify
- Transmitted through direct contact among stars and indirect contact via water
- Healthy individuals detect sick individuals, and actively flee away from them
- Many sea star species affected, but sunflower sea stars most severely impacted

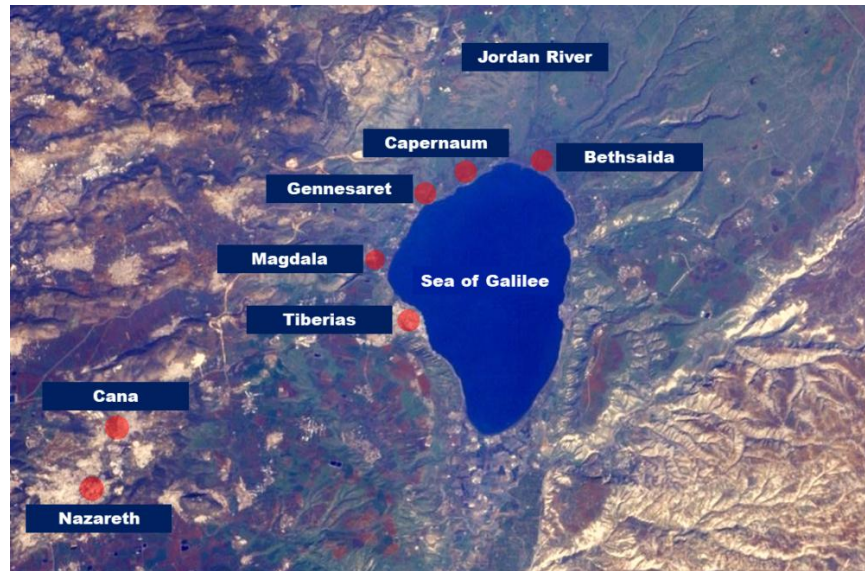


### **Sea of Galilee**

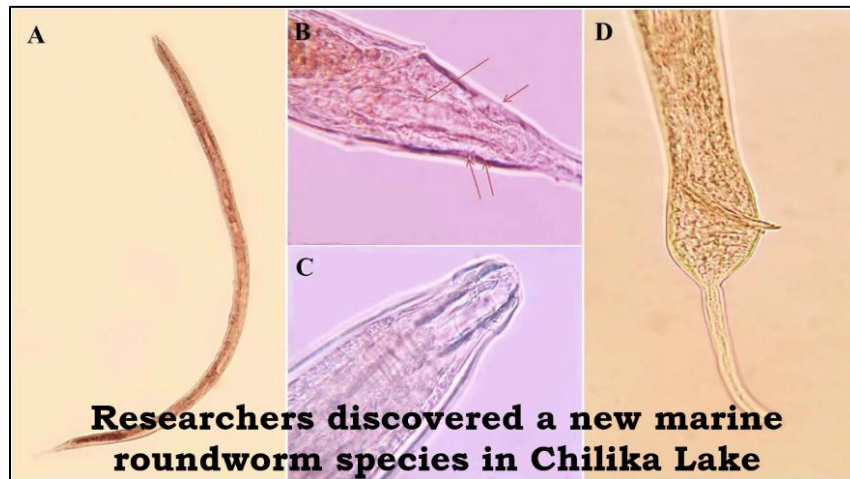
- ❖ The Sea of Galilee in Israel has turned red because of a green algae species called *Botryococcus braunii*.
- ❖ This alga produces a red pigment under sunlight, which accumulates in the water, causing the colour change.
- ❖ The algae bloom is linked to rising global temperatures and nutrient buildup caused by climate change.
- ❖ Although harmless to humans, this bloom can disturb aquatic life by blocking sunlight and reducing oxygen levels.



- ❖ Similar red water events were recorded in Israel's Dead Sea region in 2022 due to the same algae species.



### ***Admirandus odishaensis***



- ❖ Researchers discovered a new marine roundworm species in Chilika Lake.
- ❖ The species is named *Admirandus odishaensis* after Odisha, where it was found.
- ❖ *Admirandus odishaensis* belongs to the genus *Admirandus*, first reported in the northern Indian Ocean.
- ❖ Previously, the genus was known only near Africa in the Indian Ocean.
- ❖ The Marine nematodes serve as bioindicators of ecosystem health due to their sensitivity to environmental changes.

## PERSONALITIES, AWARDS, AND EVENTS

### Equator Prize 2025

- ❖ The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) declared ten winners of the Equator Prize 2025.
- ❖ The award honours the nature-based solutions by Indigenous Peoples and local communities that support sustainable development and ecological resilience.
- ❖ Winners were selected under the theme Nature for Climate Action, with a focus on women and youth leadership.
- ❖ Bibifathima Swa Sahaya Sangha from Karnataka, India, was the only winner from the country
- ❖ It supports 5000 farmers through millet farming seed banks and solar-powered processing.
- ❖ Other winners are from Argentina, Brazil, Ecuador, Indonesia, Kenya, Papua New Guinea, Peru and Tanzania, showcasing community-led climate and biodiversity action.



## IMPORTANT DAYS

### World Lion Day 2025 - August 10

- ❖ It aims to raise awareness about the rapidly declining lion population and the urgent need for their conservation.
- ❖ Lions (*Panthera leo*) are the most social big cats, found mainly in sub-Saharan Africa.

- ❖ The Asiatic lion (*Panthera leo persica*) is slightly smaller than the African lion.
- ❖ Asiatic lion numbers grew from 523 in 2015 to 891 by 2025, per the 16th Lion Census (2025).
- ❖ It is listed as Vulnerable in the IUCN Red List.
- ❖ The Project Lion was launched on August 15, 2020, to secure the future of Asiatic lions.

